

Valentine: Why how do you know that I am in love?

Speed: Marry, by these special marks: - you have learned...  
to sign like a school-boy that had lost his A B C.

U N I Q U E   X V I T H   C E N T U R Y  
E N G L I S H  
C H I L D ' S   B O O K

A. B. C. WITH THE PATER NOSTER, AVE, CREDE AND X COMAUNDEMENTES.  
Folio, single sheet; folded to make a booklet of 4 leaves, 12mo.  
3 7/8 by 2 3/4 inches. Preserved in full morocco box. Printed at  
London in the Old bayly by Richard Lant. No date, but about 1536.

A unique child's book which had disappeared from sight for  
over a century. Variouslly considered by authorities as having been  
intended as a Horn Book or as an education book for the very young  
scholar.

Last seen by bibliographers at the beginning of the Nineteenth  
Century, the volume is described as follows by Ames-Herbert-Dibden's  
Typographical Antiquities, 1816, Vol. III, page 581, item 1779:-

"The ABC &c. Without date. Octavo. It begins with five differ-  
ent Alphabets, and Gloria Patri; then the Pater-noster, &c., grace  
before meat, and after. Printed only on one side, to be folded as  
blank pages to be pasted together, and make one leaf of two; or four  
small leaves of the whole sheet. Licensed by the Company."

From 1816 on, the volume seems to have disappeared. Pollard,  
apparently from the above entry, records the fact that the work was  
printed by Lant (Handlist of Books Printed by English Printers  
Bibliographical Society) but indicates no copy known.

Duff, Century of the English Book Trade also had not seen a  
copy. He records that the Old Bailey address was the first of  
several addresses at which Lant printed, - hence books without date  
printed at that address must of necessity ante-date those of  
established dates printed at other location.

Though Pollard, in a haphazard fashion, gives Lant's dates  
as 1542-1563 (op. Cit.), Duff records that "Richard Lant, Printer, in  
London, was made a freeman of the Stationers on the 6th September, 1537,  
and paid 44 shillings for the privilege.... When he started printing,  
he was living in the Old Bailey." Thus proving Pollard in error, and  
establishing the fact that in 1537, Lant was already a recognized printer  
of sufficient standing to be admitted to the Stationers Company.

The volume under consideration bears a manuscript date of 1536,  
written in an old hand! While this is not conclusive evidence of its  
actual date, the writer may have had access to evidence now no longer  
available. Certainly the sheet was printed before 1542 when Lant was  
sent to the Fleet prison for printing Tolwyn's The Manne of Synne  
(of which no copy now survives.)

The date of 1536, if it is the correct date, would establish this as the earliest known English A. B. C., the earliest known English Horn Book (for it can be considered as such) and the earliest known book printed in England strictly for children!

Lant, moreover, is the rarest of all English printers; far more rare, for instance, than is Caxton. Of the many books that he printed from 1536 or 1537 until 1563, most have disappeared entirely. Only two of his works are recorded in the British Museum for instance, and there are none at Cambridge.

Of English A. B. C.s, the following are now known.

1. The present example, printed by Richard Lant. Unique. Not in the Short Title Catalogue.
2. A.B.C. for children. J. King. No date. Entered at the Stationers 1561/2. S.T.C. No. 18. Unique copy at Queen's College, Oxford.
3. The B. A. C.(sic) booke in Latyn and in Englysshe. T. Petyt. No date but said to be 1568. S.T.C. No. 19. Unique copy at Emmanuel College, Cambridge.
4. The A. B. C. set forth by the Kynges Majestie. W. Powell. No date, but said to be 1545. S.T.C. No. 20. Unique copy in the British Museum.
5. The A. B. C.; with the catechisme. for the Company of Stationers, 1633. S.T.C. No. 21. Unique copy was in the Guild Hall Library, London.

The rarity of these little books requires no summing up after the above evidence.

See Charles C. Butterworth, Early Primers for the Young,  
children, Bibliog. Soc., Ann. Papers 43 (1949) 374-382  
especially pp. 377-78  
Ca. 1542



# The a b c

with the Pater noster

Aue/ Credo/ and .c.

Comaundemen

tes in En

glyshe

newly translated and

set forth at the kynge

most graciously com

maunder

ment.

15

36

Printed at London in the  
old tower by Richard Lane



✠ A a b c d e f g h i k l m n o p  
q r s t u v w x y z z?

Est. Amen.

A B C D E F G H I K L  
M N O P Q R S T U  
V X Y Z.

A B C D E F G H  
I K L M N O P Q  
R S T U X.

✠ A a b c d e f g h i k l m n o p  
q r s t u v w x y z &. est Amen.  
A B C D E F G H I K L M N  
O P Q R S T V X.

In the name of the father &  
son / & the holy ghost, Amen.

**T**he seven peticyons of  
the Pater noster.



Our father whiche  
arte in heuyn/ha,  
lowed be thy na  
me. Thy kynged  
dome come.

Thy wyll be done in erth/ as  
it is in heuen.

Geue vs this daye our dayly  
bred. And forgyue vs our  
trespasses as we forgyue the  
that trespasse agaynst vs.

And let vs not be led into tem  
tacyon. But delpyet vs from  
euyll. Amen.



The salutation of the An-  
gel called Ave Maria,

**A**yle MARY full of  
grace / the lord is w<sup>th</sup>  
the. Blessed arte thou  
longe woman. And blessed  
the fruyte of thy wombe.  
Amen.

The Crede / or the. xii. arty-  
cles of the chrysten fayth.

**B**eleue in G O D the  
father almighty maker  
heuen and erth.  
and in Iesu Christ his only

sonne our lord.

Which was conceived by the  
holy goost / borne of the vyrgyne Mary.

Suffred vnder Pontes Pilate  
te was crucified / deed / buryed /  
and descended into hell.  
And the thyrde daye he rose a  
gayne frome deth.

He ascended in to heuen / and  
sytte on the ryght hand of  
god the father almyghty.

From thence he shall come to  
iudge the quicke and the deed  
I beleue in the holy goost.

The holy Catholyke church.

The communion of sayntes.

the forgyuenesse of synne  
The resurreccion of the body  
And the lyfe euerlastyng

Amen

The .x. commaundementes  
of allmyghty God.

**T**HOU shalt haue non  
other Goddes but me  
Thou shalt not make  
to thy selfe any graue ymage  
nor any lykenesse of any thinge  
that is in heauen aboue / or in  
erth beneth / nor in the water  
vnder the erth / thou shalt not  
bow downe to them / nor wor-  
shipp them.



**T**hou shalt not take the na  
me of thy lordē god in vayne.

Remembre that thou keepe  
holy thy Saboth day.

Honoꝝ thy father & thy moder

**T**hou shalt do no murther.

**T**hou shalt not commytte  
adultery.

**T**hou shalt not steale.

**T**hou shalt beare no false  
wytnes agaynst thy neybour

**T**hou shalt not desyre thy  
neybours house / thou shalt  
not desyre thy neybours wyfe  
noꝝ his seruaūt / noꝝ his mayd  
noꝝ his oxe noꝝ his asse / noꝝ a  
ny thing that is thy neyboꝝs.

**G**race afoze meate.

The lord aboue / graunt vs to  
take

His gracypouse gyftes / with  
thankes geuyng

And his gospell not to forsake  
which is our helth & life lastig

Our father. &c.

**G**race after meate.

Thanks to that lord that  
all hath sent

For this our fode content

And for his worde / which is  
our helth

And lyfe of soule as scripture  
telteth.

Our father which  
art in heuen. &c.      Amen.

